

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the method comprising:

receiving a television signal from a signal source;

displaying the television signal;

detecting an incoming communication ~~telephone call~~ at the interactive television system, wherein the incoming communication is sent from a television set-top box; and

automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback after the communication ~~telephone call~~ is terminated.

2-5. (cancelled).

6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the communication ~~telephone call~~ is automatically buffered in response to detecting the incoming communication ~~telephone call~~.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the communication ~~telephone call~~ is automatically buffered in response to a user accepting receipt of answering the communication ~~telephone call~~.

8. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

detecting a user accepting receipt of the communication ~~answering the telephone call~~; and

in response to detecting the communication ~~telephone call~~ being terminated, playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the communication ~~telephone call~~ was detected.

9. (currently amended) The method of claim 8, wherein detecting a user accepting receipt of the communication ~~answering the telephone call~~ comprises detecting the communication being presented on a display of an off-the-hook condition on a telephone line coupled to the interactive television system.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
detecting a user accepting receipt of the communication ~~answering the telephone call~~; and

in response to detecting the communication ~~call~~ being terminated, playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the communication ~~telephone call~~ was accepted by the user answered.

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
in response to a user command, playing back the television signal being buffered while the communication ~~telephone call~~ is in progress.

12. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein buffering comprises:
encoding the television signal; and
storing the encoded television signal in a storage device.
13. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
in response to the communication ~~telephone call~~ being terminated,
automatically playing back the television signal being buffered; and
during automatic playback of the buffered television signal, resuming
display of a real-time television signal from the signal source in response to a
user command.
14. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein resuming comprises:
playing back the buffered television signal at a modified rate in
response to a transport control.
15. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for
mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the method comprising:
receiving a television signal from a signal source;
displaying the television signal;
detecting an interactive option ~~an outgoing telephone call~~ at the
interactive television system; and
automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback
after the interactive option ~~telephone call~~ is terminated.

16-18. (cancelled).

19. (currently amended) The method of claim 15, further comprising:

in response to detecting the interactive option ~~telephone call~~ being terminated, playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~outgoing telephone call~~ was detected.

20. (currently amended) The method of claim 15 4, wherein buffering comprises:

encoding the television signal; and

storing the encoded television signal in a storage device.

21. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

a tuner that receives a television signal from a signal source;

a video controller that displays the television signal on a display device;

a detection component that detects an interactive option ~~incoming telephone call~~ at the interactive television system; and

a buffering component that automatically buffers the television signal for subsequent playback after the interactive option ~~telephone call~~ is terminated.

22-26. (cancelled).

27. (currently amended) The system of claim 21, wherein the buffering component automatically buffers the television signal in response to the interactive option becoming available to a user of the interactive television system detecting the incoming telephone call.

28. (currently amended) The system of claim 21, wherein the buffering component automatically buffers the television signal in response to a user activating the interactive option ~~answering the telephone call.~~

29. (currently amended) The system of claim 21, wherein the detection component detects a user activating the interactive option ~~answering the telephone call~~, the system further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to detecting the interactive option ~~telephone call~~ being terminated, plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option became available to the user ~~telephone call was detected.~~

30. (currently amended) The system of claim 21, wherein the detection component detects a user activating the interactive option ~~answering the telephone call~~, the system further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to detecting the interactive option ~~telephone call~~ being terminated, plays back the television signal being

buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option was activated by the user ~~telephone call was answered~~.

31. (currently amended) The system of claim 21, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to a user command, plays back the television signal being buffered while the a user is interacting with the interactive option ~~telephone call is in progress~~.

32. (original) The system of claim 21, wherein the buffering component comprises:

an encoder that encodes the television signal; and

a storage device that stores the encoded television signal.

33. (currently amended) The system of claim 21, further comprising:

a playback component that automatically plays back the television signal being buffered in response to the interactive option ~~telephone call~~ being terminated and, during automatic playback of the buffered television signal, resumes display of a real-time television signal from the signal source in response to a user command.

34. (original) The system of claim 33, wherein the playback component plays back the buffered television signal at a modified rate in response to a transport control.

35. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

- a tuner that receives a television signal from a signal source;
- a video controller that displays the television signal on a display device;
- a detection component that detects a interactive option being activated
by a user of an outgoing telephone call at the interactive television system;

and

- a buffering component that automatically buffers the television signal for subsequent playback after the user has terminated activation of the interactive option ~~telephone call is terminated~~.

36-38. (cancelled).

39. (currently amended) The system of claim 35, further comprising:

- a playback component that, in response to detecting the interactive option ~~telephone call~~ being terminated, plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~outgoing telephone call~~ was activated ~~detected~~.

40. (currently amended) The system of claim 35 24, wherein the buffering component comprises:

- an encoder that encodes the television signal; and

a storage device that stores the encoded television signal.

41. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the method comprising:

receiving a television signal from a signal source;

displaying the television signal on a television;

detecting an incoming communication ~~telephone call~~ on a ~~telephone line coupled to~~ the interactive television system, wherein the incoming communication is sent from a television set-top box;

automatically buffering the television signal;

detecting a user accepting receipt of the communication ~~answering the telephone call~~; and

in response to the communication ~~telephone call~~ being terminated, playing back the television signal being buffered.

42. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

- a tuner that receives a television signal from a signal source;
- a video controller that displays the television signal on a television;
- a detection component that detects an interactive option being presented to a user of incoming telephone call on a telephone line coupled to the interactive television system;

- a buffering component that automatically buffers the television signal;

and

- a playback component that, in response to the interactive option telephone call being terminated, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered.

43. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

- means for receiving a television signal from a signal source;
- means for displaying the television signal;
- means for detecting an interactive option incoming telephone call at the interactive television system; and
- means for automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback after the interactive option telephone call is terminated.

44. (new) The method of claim 15, wherein terminating the interactive option comprises removing the content of the interactive option from display on the television system.

45. (new) The method of claim 15, further comprising:
in response to detecting the interactive option being terminated, playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option was activated by a user.

46. (new) The method of claim 15, wherein the interactive option comprises at least one option selected from the group consisting of completing polls, completing surveys, following an Internet link embedded in a television broadcast, and making an online purchase.

47. (new) The system of claim 21, wherein the interactive option comprises at least one option selected from the group consisting of completing polls, completing surveys, following an Internet link embedded in a television broadcast, and making an online purchase.

48. (new) The system of claim 28, wherein the user activating the interactive option comprises making an interactive option selection and displaying the selection on a display of the interactive television system in response to a user command.